



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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The lobster fishery along the coast of Maine, chief United States source of this crustacean, was so successful in 1945 that the total catch may rival the heavy production of this industry during the 1880's, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported today.

Reports received from fishery authorities of the State of Maine indicate that the yield of lobsters during the first eleven months of the year was approximately 18 million pounds. The catch during December, not yet tabulated, probably added little to this total because of stormy weather.

Lobster production only a few years ago had fallen so low that serious concern was felt for the future of this resource, according to Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. However, an increase in the catch of lobsters became apparent several years ago, the catch in Maine rising from an average of seven million pounds, during the period between 1935 and 1940, to 11.5 million pounds in 1943. Last year the upward trend continued; the 1944 catch was about 13 million pounds.

Biological studies now being conducted by the State and Federal Governments are expected to show whether the increase in the catch is actually the result of an increase in the lobster population, or may be due to other causes.

Lobstering is one of the chief industries along the Maine coast, giving employment to more men than any other fishery of the State. In 1945 5,307 lobster fishermen were licensed in Maine.

Although lobsters are found as far south as New Jersey along the shore and as far as North Carolina in deep water, about two-thirds of the U. S. catch is taken in Maine waters. Rockland, the Mt. Desert area, Boothbay Harbor, and Portland are important centers of the fishery.

Full-time lobstermen operate from 100 to 150 traps or pots, which they visit daily if weather permits. Part-time fishermen who depend on other occupations for their principal livelihood may operate two or three dozen pots to supplement their income.

Wartime shortages of rope, lath and other pot materials, and engine parts have been considerably eased, Dr. Gabrielson said, and with the return of fishermen who have been in service the intensity of the fishery may be expected to increase.

Experiments on the rearing of young lobsters in hatcheries are carried on by the Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the Maine Department of Sea and Shore Fisheries at Boothbay Harbor. In addition to artificial propagation, measures used to conserve the lobster resource are the protection of spawning females and the imposition of size limits.

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